

RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1949.All Items - "C" Series.

Index numbers of retail prices of all items ("C" Series) - with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1000 - for the December quarter, 1949, with figures for September quarter, 1949, for comparison (in brackets), were:- Brisbane, 1393 (1364); Toowoomba, 1408 (1377); Rockhampton, 1399 (1373); Townsville, 1444 (1418); Bundaberg, 1374 (1352); and Warwick, 1390 (1371).

The rise in retail prices in the December quarter of 1949, as measured by the "C" Series index number, was slightly greater than in the September quarter in all Queensland towns for which the index is calculated except Bundaberg and Warwick. Over the four quarters of 1949, rises in individual towns varied from 7.7 per cent. in Bundaberg to 9.0 per cent. in Toowoomba. The Brisbane index, which is used most by wage-fixing authorities, rose by 7.9 per cent., compared with 11.0 per cent. during 1948.

The smaller rise in prices during 1949 was due chiefly to the negligible increase in the March quarter (0.3 per cent.), when retailers' profit margins were reduced by the Prices Commissioner. However, both the September and December quarters of 1949 also showed lower rates of increase than the corresponding quarters of 1948, the increase being 2.1 per cent. in the latest quarter compared with 3.2 per cent. in the corresponding quarter of 1948.

The increase in the December quarter of 1949 was due, in Brisbane, almost equally to rises in the prices of food and groceries and of clothing and footwear, which increased by 2.9 and 3.1 per cent. respectively. Miscellaneous items (household drapery, hardware, fuel, light, etc.) rose by only 0.5 per cent. (compared with 2.3 and 2.0 per cent. in the two preceding quarters), and the rent section of the index rose by 0.5 per cent. In the provincial towns, food and grocery prices rose less than in Brisbane, the increases ranging from 0.8 per cent. in Bundaberg to 1.8 per cent. in Townsville. The Brisbane increase in clothing and footwear prices was, however, exceeded in all these towns except Warwick, the largest increases being 4.4 per cent. in Toowoomba and 3.9 per cent. in Bundaberg.

The indexes show the following percentage increases when compared with those for the periods shown.

Retail Price Index, "C" Series, Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1949.

City.	From Year Ended June, 1939.		From December Quarter, 1948.	From September Quarter, 1949.
	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	..	..	61.4	7.9
Toowoomba..	..	..	65.5	9.0
Rockhampton ..	..	..	62.5	8.4
Townsville ..	..	..	58.3	8.2
Bundaberg..	..	..	63.4	7.7
Warwick ..	..	..	69.1	8.4

Food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and the miscellaneous group of items comprising household drapery and hardware, fuel, light, fares, etc., have shown the following percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, December Quarter, 1949.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1949.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1949.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1949.
Brisbane ..	%	%	%	%	%	%
Toowoomba..	59.7	2.9	149.9	3.1	38.4	0.5
Rockhampton ..	69.4	1.5	152.0	4.4	34.9	0.3
Townsville ..	55.4	1.3	146.9	3.3	40.8	0.1
Bundaberg	53.2	1.8	148.9	3.7	39.3	0.3
Warwick ..	54.3	0.8	149.8	3.9	37.3	0.4
	64.1	1.6	151.3	2.0	39.1	0.5

Food and Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

As shown in the previous table, food prices increased, during the quarter, in the six cities by amounts ranging from 0.8 per cent. in Bundaberg to 2.9 per cent. in Brisbane. The increases were due mainly to rises in the prices of sugar, bacon, condensed milk, beef, and pork. A rise in the price of bread in Brisbane caused the percentage increase to be greater in the capital than in the other five cities, whilst a drop in the price of milk in Bundaberg was the cause of the increase being only 0.8 per cent. in that city. During the quarter, tea decreased in price in all cities and eggs in all except Brisbane and Warwick.

The rent index remained stationary in Bundaberg and Warwick, but increased in Brisbane (0.5 per cent.), Toowoomba (1.9 per cent.), Rockhampton (2.3 per cent.), and Townsville (0.2 per cent.).

Clothing, Footwear, and Miscellaneous Items.

Except in Bundaberg, increases in the clothing and footwear index numbers were not as great during the December quarter as in the previous quarter.

The miscellaneous items index increased by amounts ranging from 0.1 per cent. in Rockhampton to 0.5 per cent. in Brisbane and Warwick.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in December quarter, 1949, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Items.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2	1	0	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	2	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$
Rockhampton ..	1	0	1	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{3}$				1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
Townsville ..	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$		1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
Bundaberg ..		19	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	4 $\frac{3}{2}$	15	10 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	8 $\frac{1}{4}$
Warwick ..		19	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	17	5 $\frac{1}{4}$		1	0	0	1	1	2 $\frac{1}{4}$

In relation to Brisbane, the cost of all items together remained, in the various cities, much the same as in the September quarter, Townsville still being the city with the highest prices. During the December quarter a consumer in Warwick had to pay 19s. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for goods costing £1 in Brisbane, whereas in the previous quarter £1 0s. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. worth of goods purchased in that city cost £1 in Brisbane.

Food and grocery prices in the five provincial cities came closer to Brisbane prices. In Toowoomba, the excess over Brisbane prices fell from 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to only 2d. in every £1. The most expensive city for food and groceries was Townsville, where it cost £1 1s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., or over 1s. more than in the next dearest city (Bundaberg), to purchase food costing £1 in Brisbane.

Costs of clothing and footwear, in relation to Brisbane, increased in all cities except Warwick, where prices of these items decreased from an excess of 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £1 to the same level as in Brisbane.

Comparative prices of miscellaneous items remained almost the same as in the previous quarter.

Basic Wage Rates in State Capital Cities.

The following table shows, for the December quarter of 1949, the retail price index number ("C" Series) for each of the six capital cities and the prevailing basic wage rates for males prescribed by Commonwealth and State industrial tribunals. The fourth column shows the amounts which would have been required in Brisbane to provide a standard of living equivalent to that provided by each State basic wage in its own capital city. The differences between these amounts and the State basic wage for Brisbane, which are given in the last column, show the margin of advantage in real purchasing power provided by the Queensland basic wage over each of the other State basic wages, according to price levels and wages prevailing at the middle of November, 1949.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates, December Quarter, 1949.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series) 4th Quarter, 1949.	Commonwealth Court Basic Wage for Males at 15. 11. 49.	State Court Basic Wage for Males at 15. 11. 49.	Equivalent at Brisbane Prices of Each State Basic Wage.	Margin of Purchasing Power in Favour of Brisbane State Basic Wage.
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.
Brisbane ..	1393	6 5 0	6 9 0	6 9 0	-
Sydney ..	1486	6 12 0	6 12 0	6 3 9	5 3
Melbourne ..	1472	6 10 0	6 10 0	6 3 0	6 0
Adelaide ..	1440	6 6 0	6 5 0	6 0 11	8 1
Perth ..	1459	6 9 0	6 15 11	6 9 9	-0 9
Hobart ..	1459	6 8 0	6 8 0	6 2 2	6 10

Following the publication of the index numbers shown in the above table, the basic wage of the Commonwealth Court was automatically adjusted from 1st February, 1950. The new rates and the amounts of adjustments are shown below, together with the latest basic wage rates for males and females declared by the various State industrial authorities, and the dates from which they operated.

Basic Wage Rates, March Quarter, 1950.

Capital City.	Commonwealth Basic Wage.		State Basic Wage.		
	Amount. <sup>a</sup>	Increase on Previous Quarter.	Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.
	£ s. d.	s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	
Brisbane ..	6 7 0	2 0	6 11 0	4 1 6	30. 1. 50
Sydney ..	6 15 0	3 0	6 15 0	3 13 0	1. 2. 50
Melbourne ..	6 14 0	4 0	(6 14 0)	(3 12 6)	(1. 2. 50) <sup>b</sup>
Adelaide ..	6 9 0	3 0	6 9 0	3 9 6	1. 2. 50
Perth ..	6 11 0	2 0	6 18 1	3 14 7	31. 1. 50
Hobart ..	6 11 0	3 0	(6 11 0)	(3 10 6)	(1. 2. 50) <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rate for males. The female rate is generally 54 per cent. of the male rate.

<sup>b</sup> No State wage declared, but rates shown are those of Commonwealth Court which are followed to a large extent.

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Table No. 1 - The "All Items" Retail Prices Index - "C" Series.  
 (Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1949.	Quarter Ended -				
				Decr., 1948.	March, 1949.	June, 1949.	Sept., 1949.	Decr., 1949.
Brisbane ..	863	1079	1348	1291	1295	1338	1364	1393
Toowoomba ..	851	1092	1360	1292	1304	1349	1377	1408
Rockhampton ..	861	1084	1357	1290	1307	1349	1373	1399
Townsville ..	912	1119	1404	1335	1356	1397	1418	1444
Bundaberg ..	841	1059	1335	1276	1287	1327	1352	1374
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	864	1082	1352	1294	1300	1343	1368	1397
Warwick ..	822	1073	1349	1282	1294	1339	1371	1390

Table No. 2 - Food, Groceries, and Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses) Index - "B" Series.  
 (Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1949.	Quarter Ended -				
				Decr., 1948.	March, 1949.	June, 1949.	Sept., 1949.	Decr., 1949.
Brisbane ..	852	927	1149	1116	1130	1146	1147	1171
Toowoomba ..	821	950	1170	1126	1153	1169	1169	1188
Rockhampton ..	837	915	1145	1107	1129	1145	1143	1161
Townsville ..	916	980	1214	1169	1205	1213	1211	1228
Bundaberg ..	799	888	1110	1077	1098	1113	1110	1117
Weighted Average								
Five Towns ..	851	930	1153	1118	1136	1151	1151	1173
Warwick ..	768	897	1124	1080	1103	1124	1128	1141

Table No. 3 - Average Retail Prices of Food and Groceries, Brisbane.

Commodity and Unit of Quantity.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Month of -		Commodity and Unit of Quantity.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Month of -	
		Sept., 1949.	Dec., 1949.			Sept., 1949.	Dec., 1949.
		d.	d.	d.	d.	d.	d.
Bread ..	2 lb.	5.33	7.50	8.00	Eggs ..	1 doz.	19.69
Flour ..	2 lb.	3.73	5.36	5.36	Milk ..	1 qt.	6.00
Tea ..	1 lb.	26.99	33.00	31.41	Beef -		
Sugar ..	1 lb.	3.98	4.46	4.91	Sirloin Roast	1 lb.	8.73
Sago ..	1 lb.	3.00	9.35	8.75	Steak, Rump	1 lb.	11.34
Jam, Plum	1½ lb.	8.02	15.59	15.64	Steak, Chuck	1 lb.	5.83
Oats, Flaked	1 lb.	3.57	6.00	6.00	Rolled Brisket	1 lb.	5.48
Raisins ..	1 lb.	10.57	16.89	17.00	Mutton -		
Potatoes ..	7 lb.	14.88	23.14	23.05	Leg ..	1 lb.	7.75
Onions ..	1 lb.	2.93	3.70	3.41	Loin Chops	1 lb.	7.78
Soap ..	1 lb.	6.20	9.82	9.82	Pork -		
Butter ..	1 lb.	19.00	25.91	25.91	Leg ..	1 lb.	11.40
Cheese ..	1 lb.	13.28	17.59	17.41	Chops ..	1 lb.	11.48